

Clinton Herald

Full house turns out at Clinton health care meeting

By Jason Nevel

CLINTON - Monday's health care town hall meeting at Ashford University was the most attended out of any open forums U.S. Congressman Bruce Braley has hosted so far.

The crowd of 400 people packed the Durgin Center gymnasium for a two-hour debate that featured few disruptions and a mostly supportive audience of a national health care plan backed by Braley.

"I think it says that people in Clinton, like a lot of Americans, know that health care is one of the most important issues that affect their life," Braley said. "Like most Iowa crowds, the large percentage of people here wanted to be respectful and polite even if they disagreed with me."

Monday's stop in Clinton was one of 12 the second-term Democrat will host. His other meetings in Dubuque, Quad-Cities and several other towns located in the First Congressional District brought out between 100 and 300 people.

Braley was cheered on several different occasions but some questioners expressed concerns to the Waterloo Democrat that Congress is moving too fast in adopting a national health care plan.

"Don't be in such a hurry, we're spending a lot of money," one member said, but added he supports nationalized health care plan.

Garry Land, owner of Land Eye Center in Clinton, told Braley he would retire from 29 years of eye care service if the legislation is approved because the amount he would be reimbursed would not compare to the boost in patients he would treat.

"He said he was going to increase my reimbursement but he can't promise it," Land said. "You can't expect things to come out of the government like they think they're going to."

But the overall tone of the meeting was receptive to Braley, who serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Randy Potter, a small businessman from Preston, asked Braley if the proposal could be altered after it was approved because he said he wanted to remind people that not every provision they feared is set in stone.

"People are so scared that the government is going to pass something that we're going to be stuck with," Potter said. "If we don't like it we can change it again and that's what people forget."

Braley said one of the main goals of the meetings is to help debunk some of the false information circulating about the House plan. He assured people that the House version does not provide coverage for illegal aliens and the controversial "death panel" rumors are overblown.

"Nobody wants to pull the plug on grandma," he said.

Braley will also stop at the Jackson County Fairgrounds, Pearson Hall, 1212 E. Quarry St., Maquoketa on Thursday at 2 p.m.